DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 293 027 CG 020 675

AUTHOR	Rosenbloom, Jonathan, Ed.
TITLE	Helping Your Child Say No to Alcohol.
INSTITUTION	Children's Television Workshop, New York, N.Y.
SPONS AGENCY	National Inst. on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (DHHS), Rockville, Md.
REPORT NO	DHHS-ADM-87-1500
PUB DATE	87
CONTRACT	ADM-281-85-0015
NOTE	29p.; Some illustrations may not reproduce clearly. For a related guide for young people, see CG 020 675.
AVAILABLE FROM	National Clearinghouse for Alcohol and Drug Information, P.O. Box 23451, Rockville, MD 20852.
PUB TYPE	Guides - General (050)
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC02 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Alcohol Abuse; Drinking; *Helping Relationship; Parent Child Relationship; *Parent Materials; *Parent Role; Peer Influence; *Preadolescents; *Prevention

ABSTRACT

This guide was written for parents of preadolescents and young adolescents to help them teach their children to say "No" to alcohol. Illustrated with numerous black and white photographs and other graphics, the guide presents information about drinking among preadolescents and discusses how parents can drink themselves and, at the same time, teach their children not to drink. Ten steps are listed that parents can use to help their preadolescent avoid alcohol use. Seven reasons children give for why they drink are presented and discussed. Ways that alcohol can affect the brain and body are presented. Techniques are given to help parents keep communication lines open between them and their children. A list of parental pitfalls is included. Suggestions are given for helping children build self-confidence and deal with peer pressure. Symptoms of drinking are listed and steps parents can take if they suspect their child is drinking are discussed. The importance of family ties and of spending time together as a family is emphasized. The use of advertising in promoting alcohol use is considered. The document concludes with a list of resource groups for parents. (NB)

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HELPING YOUR CHILD SAY NO TO ALCOHOL

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Number ADM 281-85-0015 for the Office for Substance Abuse Prevention

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DHHS Publication No. ADM 87-1500. Printed 1987

HELPING YOUR CHILD SAY NO TO ALCOHOL

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration

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Photo: © Jeffry W. Myers/FPG

OFF TO A GOOD START

We don't have to tell you that what you're doing as a parent of a child approaching adolescence hasn't been a snap—but we congratulate you, especially, on protecting the health and safety of your child. You've put in a lot of hard work, time, and effort—not to mention an infinite amount of patience.

You've taught your child about safety at home and on the street. You make certain your preteen gets enough sleep and eats the right food. And you've made sure to be there to offer comfort after a nightmare, to bandage a cut finger, or to deal with a not-so-hot grade on a math or social studies test. But there's always something else to come along to test your "parent powers" *and* your frustration level.

What's the "test" this time around? Alcohol use by 8- to 12-year-old boys and girls.

You may be thinking, "Alcohol use by preteens? You must be kidding!" But according to recent surveys and studies:

- Rich kids, poor kids, and middle class kids all report experiencing increasing pressures to try alcohol at earlier ages.

- In the U.S., 4.6 million high school students experience serious problems with the drug, alcohol.

- It's important to remember that alcohol is a "gateway" drug. If kids are drinking they may lose their normal inhibitions. If someone offers them marijuana or cocaine while they're drinking, they are much more likely to say "yes" instead of "no" to these drugs or other risk-taking behavior.

- Approximately 30 percent of boys and 22 percent of girls classify themselves as "drinkers" by the time they are 13.

"I DRINK, SO HOW CAN I TELL MY CHILD NOT TO?"

Easily. There are definite reasons why it is okay for most adults to drink moderate amounts of alcohol and definite reasons why a child should not. How you talk about it is important, however. The tough part is not sounding like a know-it-all or hypocrite. So, how do we begin?

First of all, a child's body and an adult's body are not the same. Children's bodies are still growing and developing—both inside and out. Drinking during the preteen and teen years can keep a person from learning and growing normally.

Second, there's the emotional and safety factor. Unlike adults who may drink lightly or moderately, if at all, kids don't know their limits when it comes to alcohol. One beer will affect your child much sooner and with more serious results than a heavier adult.

A child's judgment and coordination also are affected more quickly. Riding a bike can become dangerous, jumping rope can become impossible, studying becomes difficult.

And because kids are more likely than adults to do something on a dare or to try to impress their friends, drinking can have

Photo: Shirley Zeiberg/Taurus

serious consequences. At best, a child could become frightened by the strange sensations he or she is experiencing after a drink. At worst, serious accidents could occur.

These are the main reasons why most adults can drink and preteens shouldn't.

Besides all that, it's absolutely illegal for preteens to drink.

"AS A PARENT, HOW CAN I HELP MY CHILD SAY 'NO' TO ALCOHOL?"

First we can let our children know how much we are concerned about the use of alcohol as well as other drugs—and how much we are concerned about our kids.

This booklet is a start at helping you and your child come to grips with the fact that soon he or she may be offered that first drink. If that should occur, we want to help prepare you and your child to deal with that moment —and we want to help your child learn to "BE SMART! DON'T START!" to drink.

Saying "No!" to alcohol and "Yes!" to better things is an important goal we share with you.

By the way, you can use the tips and "how-tos" in this booklet in other areas of your child's life—such as saying no to other drugs, tobacco, and sexual involvements.

WHAT'S A HEALTHY KID?

There's no simple answer to that one. But all parents hope their kids will:

- **Feel good about themselves**
- **Have good, caring friends**
- **Do as well as they can in school**
- **Grow into productive, responsible adults**

10 STEPS TO HELP YOUR PRETEEN SAY NO

Here's a quick list of actions you can take to help your kids avoid alcohol use. You'll find more about each of these tips as you read the booklet.

1. TALK TO YOUR CHILD ABOUT ALCOHOL AND DRUGS.

Make sure he or she understands the dangers and problems of preteen alcohol use. Share the information about alcohol in this booklet with your child and explain it.

2. LEARN TO REALLY LISTEN TO YOUR CHILD.

Just talking to your child is half of the job. Knowing how and when to listen can keep open the lines of communication.

3. HELP YOUR CHILD FEEL GOOD ABOUT HIMSELF OR HERSELF.

Preteens and adolescents are often unsure of themselves. Knowing that their parents have confidence in them, and believe in their self-worth, means a lot. One way to do this: Give lots of praise and encouragement to your child at appropriate times.

4. HELP YOUR CHILD DEVELOP STRONG VALUES.

A strong value system, a sense of right and wrong, can give children the courage to make decisions based on facts rather than on pressure from other kids.

5. BE A GOOD ROLE MODEL OR EXAMPLE.

Kids are very aware of your attitudes and habits concerning alcohol.

6. HELP YOUR PRETEEN DEAL WITH PEER PRESSURE.

Children who have been taught to be gentle, agreeable, and loving, may need skills to enable them to resist group peer pressure.

7. SET FIRM RULES ABOUT DRINKING AND OTHER DRUG USE.

Make your family rules clear and consistent. Tell your kids they are not allowed to drink, smoke, use drugs, or anything else you object to. Be sure they also thoroughly understand the consequences of breaking these rules.

8. ENCOURAGE HEALTHY, CREATIVE ACTIVITIES.

Make sure your kids have enough structure in their lives. Create activities for them or encourage them to take part in sports, school programs, hobbies—anything that they can have fun with. Even better, join your kids in having fun.

9. TALK WITH OTHER PARENTS.

They're all going through the same thing you are. It can help to network with other neighborhood parents and community groups. If your child is going to a party to get together with friends, make sure there is a chaperone and there is no alcohol or other drugs.

10. KNOW WHAT TO DO IF YOU SUSPECT A PROBLEM.

Parents can learn to recognize the telltale signs of abuse and use of alcohol, and get help when needed from a doctor or other professional.

WHAT ARE SOME REASONS KIDS DRINK?

"I started drinking when I was 10. Some of my friends turned me on to it. I didn't really like the taste, but I was curious and I felt grown-up. At home, my parents were always arguing. Drinking helped me deal with their screaming." —Robin, 14

Robin's story isn't unusual. Kids start to drink to:

1. FIT IN AND BELONG.

When kids begin to seek important friendships outside the home, they would rather die than not fit in with a group. This is the most frequent reason given for using alcohol. Children either KNOW or BELIEVE that the kids they want to fit in with are using alcohol. It doesn't matter if they only believe it's true; they want to belong and will go to great lengths to avoid being different. Parents can join other parents to ensure that kids aren't drinking and can help dispel the belief that most of their child's peers are drinking.

Photo: © W D Zehr FPG

Photo: Jeffry Myers/Four By Five

2. FEEL GROWN-UP.

Children are impressionable. It is between the preteen and teen years that many children are questioning their attitudes towards drugs, smoking, and drinking. Because of messages in their environment, and pressure from their peers, some preteens are developing a more positive attitude towards drinking.

Adults are an important factor in shaping a young person's ideas. Homes in which adults treat excess drinking lightly mold a child's attitude towards liquor. Eye-catching displays in convenience store windows can also entice kids into thinking drinking is "cool." So do ads that children see in newspapers, magazines, and on TV.

3. BE ABLE TO LET LOOSE.

You know how awkward and self-conscious preteens can be. They may drink to relieve the anxiety that goes along with this awkwardness. Giving them social skills can ease their self-consciousness.

Photo: Jeffry Myers/Four By Five

4. MAKE THEMSELVES FEEL BETTER.

Some kids think that a drink will cheer them up or make them forget a problem. Children can, however, be taught how to solve problems or can be given the confidence they need to give them a sense of well-being.

Experts say that a child who is using alcohol to feel better often needs professional help. If you think your child has a problem, he or she needs to know that it is possible to ask for help. And all kids need to know it's not a sign of weakness, but of strength, to realize that they have a problem and want to conquer it.

5. PLEASE A GROUP OR STOP BEING SHY.

Children who drink to overcome shyness or to gain entry to a group they admire, may suffer from a lack of self-confidence. Many preteens go through periods of uncertainty about themselves. (Remember when you were a kid?)

As parents, we need to remind our kids often—and clearly—that they are loved, that they are important, and that they have a lot to offer. Kids need to feel they are worthwhile and they need that encouragement from you.

6. FIND OUT WHAT DRINKING IS ALL ABOUT.

Simple curiosity is one of the major reasons preteens drink. Sometimes a child's natural curiosity needs to be directed into other areas in order to satisfy the natural eagerness to experience new feelings and events. For instance, help your preteen understand how things work, how the body functions, or how to become involved in volunteer service.

Photo: George Glod/Four By Five

7. BE DEFIANT.

Some preteens drink *because* it's forbidden. They may want to test themselves–or you. Keeping the lines of communication open is a good start at avoiding this.

ALCOHOL: THE BRAIN

You or your child may have seen the TV music video for the "BE SMART! DON'T START!" campaign. In it, a young boy is going to meet some friends at a rock concert. On the way, he gets sidetracked by some schoolmates who offer him a drink.

As the boy is deciding what to do, we move inside his brain, watching his brain cells quivering in fear. "Don't do it!" they shout. "Think about us—if you have a drink, some of us will die!" "You won't be able to ride a skateboard!" "It won't make you cool, it'll make you sick—yuck!"

Of course, our hero is no fool. His brain cells prevail and he refuses the offered drink. He then joins his other friends who are waiting for him at the concert.

The music video is fun and entertaining. But it also delivers an important message: Alcohol affects a child's brain in serious ways.

The brain is the body's command center. It controls all of the body's functions.

In the brain, alcohol has many effects. First it relaxes the body. As more and more alcohol enters the brain cells, there are less welcome changes. Brain cells are altered with each drink. Clumsiness, slurring of words, numb feelings, blurred sight, and dizziness can occur.

Even a small amount of alcohol can be a problem—especially in a child who has had little or no experience with alcohol, who doesn't know what to expect, and whose body simply can't handle the effects of alcoholic beverages as well as an adult.

So what can this do to children? They lose their sense of coordination and become clumsy. They may fall down or have trouble walking. They have a hard time deciding what to do. They can't concentrate which makes studying, or doing the simplest household chores difficult to accomplish.

Photo: Bob Llewellyn/Four By Five

Under the influence of alcohol, a child's judgment is often affected. They may do foolish or dangerous things—riding a bike recklessly in traffic, not paying attention to where they are going, taking risks that might be dangerous.

Some children become moody and depressed. They withdraw from their families and friends. Gentle children can turn tough, boisterous, and loud.

Kids can't make decisions or think as clearly. They can't move at their best. Alcohol can cause headaches and indigestion. It changes the way people sleep and dream. In short, thanks to the brain—and too much alcohol in the system—life can become one big headache for a child.

To understand more about why alcohol is harmful to healthy growth and development, talk with your family physician.

THE BODY

Photo © Joseph Sterling

The term "white lightning" generally means moonshine—the homemade potion that some people used to brew in their backyards, bathtubs, or deep in the woods far from prying eyes. But white lightning is also a good term to describe the effects of alcohol on the body.

When an adult or a child swallows alcohol, it moves lightning fast to the stomach. There, much of it is absorbed right into the bloodstream. Unlike other drinks or food, it is not digested or processed first.

The bloodstream carries the alcohol everywhere, immediately. There isn't a body system that isn't touched by alcohol. That's one reason why the effects of too much liquor, wine, or beer are felt all over the body.

In the heart and lungs, alcohol affects heartbeat and blood pressure. Another hard-working organ—the liver—can be seriously affected, too. Without the liver, alcohol would be an out-and-out poison to the body. The liver changes alcohol into substances that are not poisonous.

The problem is that while the liver is busy changing alcohol into harmless substances, it is being poisoned itself. It takes time to heal. Therefore, if someone drinks too much and/or too often, the liver becomes severely damaged.

Being intoxicated actually means being temporarily poisoned by alcohol. Without the liver to help get rid of the poison, drinking would be fatal.

No one knows exactly how alcohol affects a child's body. But we do know that there are no benefits for the child who drinks. Alcohol interferes with judgment and learning, important abilities at any age. And, at any age, alcohol combined with other drugs, including some prescription drugs and marijuana, is extremely dangerous.

KEEPING THE LINES OPEN

What can we as parents do to make sure our preteens don't start to experiment with alcohol—especially when our kids are at such an impressionable age? After all, during the preteen and teen years, it often seems that anything a parent says can lead to an explosion, a sulk, or a disgusted, "You don't understand!"

Dealing with this isn't easy. Communication between parent and child is hard work. Sometimes it seems as if you don't even speak the same language. But chances are you do. And once you've broken through the language barrier, you may be surprised at how much fun you can have with your preteen.

Of course, no one can tell you how to raise your child. But there are some hints from experts that may help keep the lines of communication open between you and your son or daughter. Two-way communication is important. It can help ensure that your child will come to you with a problem, whether it be school, alcohol, friends, or drugs.

Here's what you can try:

Photo: Four By Five

DON'T MAKE ANY SUBJECTS OFF LIMITS.

Your kids need to feel they can talk to you about anything—from alcohol to sex to clothing to hockey. If you always change the subject, come down hard on the subject (or your child) right away, or lose your temper, he or she won't approach you.

LISTEN "BETWEEN THE LINES."

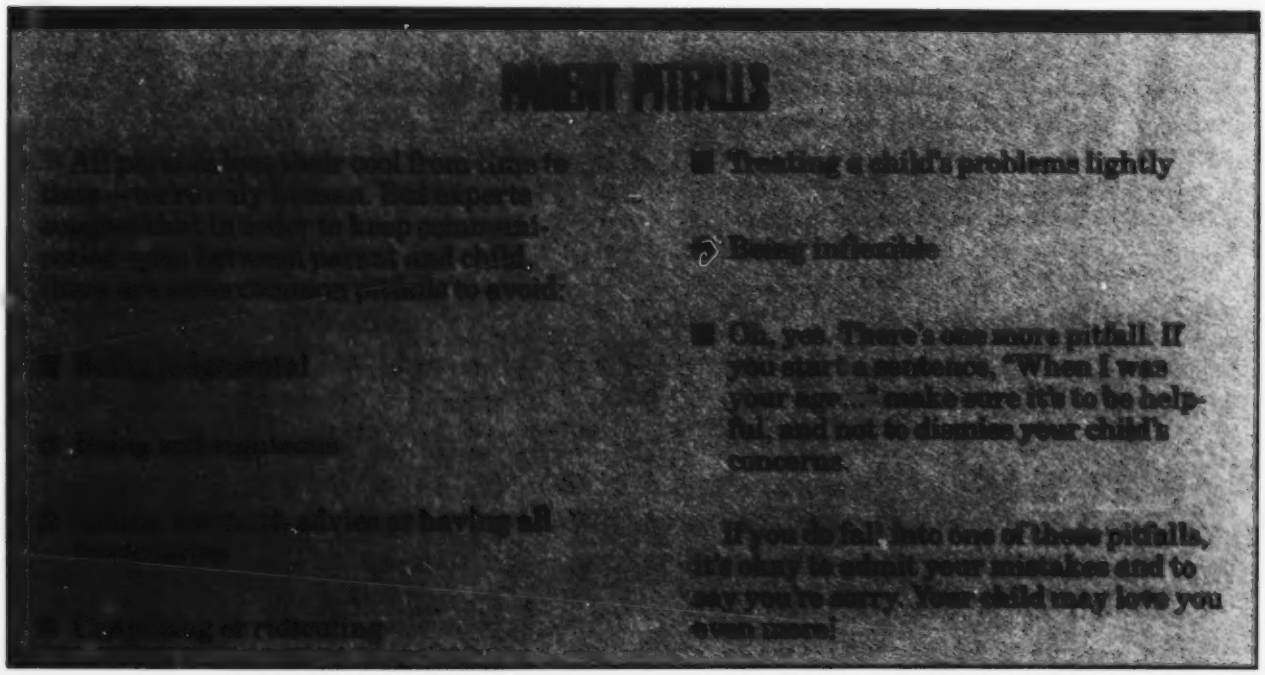
A child who comes home and says, "Tom's dad lets him have a beer on Friday nights" wants to know how you feel about the idea. You're being tested. You may feel like saying, "That's the most ridiculous thing I've ever heard of, and if I ever catch you doing that I'll break your legs." Do yourself a favor, instead...

GET THE CONVERSATION MOVING.

In a calm voice, say, "What would you do if Tom's dad offered *you* a beer?" Situations like this offer your child a chance to express his or her worries, and gives you a chance to provide helpful suggestions for handling problems. Keeping it hypothetical ("What *would* you do *if*...") makes it easier for your preteen to talk with you.

BODY LANGUAGE.

Kids pick up on the silent vibes parents send. For instance, if your child wants to talk to you and you're reading or watching TV, put down the paper or shut off the tube. Focus on your child. Direct eye contact means, "I'm listening. You have my full attention."



BUILDING SELF-CONFIDENCE

"Hey Dad, look what I made for dinner! Peanut butter, egg, marshmallow, and wheat germ casserole. I burnt it a little, but how bad can it be? Sit down, you're gonna' love it."

It may sound disgusting. It probably *is* disgusting. But what did the father do? He told his son how much he appreciated the work his child went to. The dinner showed imagination and creativity.

Even though the meal was a tastebud's disaster, the father was successful in building up his son's self-confidence, making him feel good, and encouraging his 10-year-old's competence in the kitchen.

How do self-assuredness and competence relate to alcohol use? Studies show that people with drinking problems often don't feel good about themselves. They may be very bright, but they haven't developed the necessary social and emotional skills that lead to self-confidence.

Not only can this be a cause of drinking, it can lead to other negative behavior as well. Some of these include taking other drugs and smoking.

Of course, some kids who are sure of themselves and are full of self-confidence turn to alcohol and drugs, too. These kids might do it for fun or to fit in with a "drinking crowd" whom they admire. They might do it to act grown-up. These children need to be reminded that choosing not to drink is a sign of maturity and of being in control. If they're really smart, they won't start to experiment with alcohol. That's cool!

Everybody's self-confidence waivers from time to time, so experts say it's important to develop competencies to help *all* children feel good. Here are some tips that may help you to do just that:

ASK YOUR CHILD TO GIVE YOU SOMETHING TO DO.

Ask your child for suggestions for activities you can do together. It's a great way to let your preteen know you value his or her ideas.

Watching TV, listening to their favorite music, visiting an amusement park, bowling, going to a movie, doing volunteer work, sitting around rapping, or pursuing a hobby together, may help the two of you grow closer and make your child feel wonderful—and you, too!

ALLOW FOR MISTAKES.

You are the most important teacher your child has. So if your child makes a mistake or an error in judgment, don't get bent out of shape. Tell him or her that nobody's perfect. Then help your child correct the error. Talk about the experience. Ask how he or she would handle it differently. Offer guidance.

If *you* make a mistake, the way you handle it will be a message to your child about ways to handle mistakes.

GIVE YOUR CHILD REAL RESPONSIBILITY.

Need some help around the house or the yard? Ask your child. Kids who have regular chores know that they are making a contribution and this helps them build their sense of self-confidence.

If the chores require some thought and decision-making, so much the better. Your child will feel responsible and needed, and your workload will be lightened.

GIVE LOTS OF PRAISE.

You are more likely to get the behavior you want when you emphasize the things your child is doing right.

PRAISE EFFORT, NOT JUST ACHIEVEMENTS.

There will always be children who do better or worse. That's not important. What is important is how hard your child tries and how much you show you care about the effort.

ENCOURAGE YOUR CHILD TO FIND SOMETHING THAT HE OR SHE ENJOYS.

Suggest activities that would provide an alternative to taking that first drink. What's your child interested in? What does he or she do in free time? Hobbies, sports, cooking, getting into computers, playing an instrument, collecting stamps or stickers, are some possible ideas for keeping a child busy and happy.

SHOW YOUR KIDS THAT YOU LOVE THEM.

Affection can be infectious. A parent can't give too many hugs, kisses, or pats on the back.

WHEN CORRECTING, CRITICIZE THE ACTION, NOT YOUR CHILD.

If you catch your child trying to scale a 10-foot wall, avoid saying, "Are you out of your mind? I can't believe how incredibly stupid your are for trying to do that." Instead, take a deep breath and say, "That was a dangerous thing to do. You could have been hurt. I do not want you to do that again."

When doing this, be stern and direct. Try not to yell.

If you do lose your cool, it's okay. Explain to your son or daughter that you were upset or worried because they might have been hurt, or they weren't following rules that were set up for their protection. If kids know that you're yelling out of love and concern rather than out of testiness, they'll be able to accept your criticism.

ALLOW FOR DISAGREEMENTS.

Eight-to 12-year-olds are still growing and discovering their world. They may question our decisions or our authority. This is a normal part of growing.

It's important for your child to know that it's okay to question. People (even in families!) *do* disagree. The positive side of this is that you and your child feel free to discuss differences that come up.

Photo: Four By Five

HOW TO HELP YOUR CHILD DEAL WITH PI

One of the most important reasons why a child begins to experiment with alcohol, drugs, or tobacco is peer pressure. Trying to be part of a group is an important motivator in children.

You can help avoid this by setting down a few simple rules. All kids like to have structure in their lives, even if they talk a good game about doing what they want.

BE SPECIFIC.

Tell your kids that they may not drink. Tell them why. Set a clear penalty for drinking. This can help children stave off peer pressure by saying, "It's not worth being grounded if I get caught." Or, "My father will cut off my allowance." Make sure the rules—and the penalties—are appropriate for your child.

ESTABLISH TRUST.

Let your child know you trust him or her. It's often difficult to walk the fine line between permissiveness and protection. But by setting clear rules—and allowing your child to function within the boundaries you set—he or she should have enough flexibility to feel independent.

USE PEER PRESSURE AS A POSITIVE FORCE.

Many school systems and community groups are using preteen and teen groups to develop non-drinking programs including alcohol-free get-togethers. (If such a group or program doesn't exist in your community, perhaps you and other concerned parents can get together to start one.)

GET TOGETHER WITH OTHER PARENTS IN YOUR NEIGHBORHOOD AND CHILD'S SCHOOL.

Work together to plan activities and to set *clear*, consistent, and fair rules for all the children.

ENFORCE RULES.

If your preteen breaks the rules, stick to your guns and apply the penalty. Remember that it was *your child* who decided not to follow the rule. If you don't follow through, there's a greater chance that he or she will break the rule again.

KNOW WHERE YOUR KIDS ARE. DON'T PERMIT YOUR KIDS TO ATTEND UNCHAPERONED PARTIES OR EVENTS.

Phone ahead to make sure an adult will be present. Get assurances that no alcohol or other drugs will be allowed.

GIVE YOUR CHILD IDEAS FOR SAYING NO TO PEER PRESSURE.

Your child should know that being smart and refusing a drink can mean being "cool." Saying no is a sign of maturity.

Sometimes a clever remark can do the trick, "A drink? No thanks, I'd rather save my brains for something better." Or, "No thanks, I'd rather save bad breath for a pepperoni pizza."

Or if your child is in a group that wants to drink, he or she could suggest an alternative

EER PRESSURE

such as going to the mall to play video games.

Sometimes, a simple "No thanks" and then walking away is all that is needed.

Or you can be the bad guy. Let your kids blame you if they need to: "My mother will murder me if I drink."

GIVE YOUR CHILD ALTERNATIVES TO DRINKING.

Make sure he or she has plenty of healthy, involving activities. Too much "hanging around time" can lead to trouble. If kids do hang out, know where they are doing it. Make sure it isn't near the beer or wine cooler outlet.

WATCH YOUR CHILD'S SPENDING.

If you give your child an allowance, discuss how the money gets spent. Children with excessive incomes are more likely to buy alcohol or other drugs.

IF YOU THINK YOUR CHILD IS DRINKING

A parent is the most important role model a child has. Of course, no one is perfect, not even parents. And since we're an imperfect group, with less-than-perfect kids, we don't do everything right with our sons and daughters. No matter. What counts is that your child believes you love and care for him or her.

So let's say you've done everything you possibly can in raising your child properly. You show your child you care. You've set the rules. You and other parents pay attention to what your kids are doing, and where they are going. You've let your child know you trust him or her to be able to act responsibly and know right from wrong.

Even so, you've got a funny feeling there's some drinking going on. How can you tell? Experts say there are some behavioral characteristics of kids who drink:

- If your child has been missing school frequently, or if his or her grades have dropped, or school performance has gotten worse.

Photo: © Joseph Sterling

- If your child seems to be uncharacteristically withdrawn from family, friends, or interests.
- If your child suddenly becomes accident-prone.
- If your child has severe mood swings.
- If your child hasn't been sleeping well or complains about not feeling well.

- If your child has a new set of friends who you may feel are drinkers or drug users, who seem aimless and unfocused.
- If you find alcohol containers around the house or smell alcohol on your child's breath.
- If your child starts to lie or is secretive about where he has been or whom she has been with.

Photo: Bob Llewellyn Four By Five

Photo: © Joseph Sterling

(Remember, it's entirely possible that something else is causing your child to act in an unusual or atypical manner. The important thing is to find out what is bothering your child and then to get him or her help.)

WHAT TO DO

If you think your preteen is drinking, it may be a sign that he or she is unhappy. No child *wants* to be in trouble, and it doesn't mean they are bad kids. But for some children, drinking is the only way out of personal or emotional problems. Children who drink are generally "hurting." They need all the love, compassion, and understanding we, as parents, can muster.

At the first sign of a problem, you should talk to a physician—your pediatrician or family doctor—or to a school guidance counselor, someone at a local chapter of an organization that deals with youth or alcohol problems, a member of the clergy, or a mental health professional. These people can give you guidance and help.

Be supportive of your child, offer help, don't make your preteen feel rejected. It's important for kids to understand that it's okay to seek help. That's what strong people do when they have a problem. This is true of very shy or very aggressive children as well.

FAMILY TIES

Most of us think that it takes someone with the common sense of Bill Cosby, the wisdom of Solomon, and the patience of Job to keep a family running. Let's face it: All those things would help, but most of us are just grateful to get through the day with our sanity intact!

However, in most families, a little togetherness and a lot of caring go a long way. Kids with a strong sense of family usually have a good sense of self-confidence. They feel they can take on the world. Even in these hectic times, with everybody going in different directions, try to find some time together. Here are some ideas:

ONE ON ONE.

Spend time with each of your children alone. Do something that you both enjoy. You'll probably rediscover how much fun preteens are—and your child may even help *you* relax, unwind, and feel good.

This one-to-one time will also provide your son or daughter with a chance to share with you his or her concerns, problems, feelings, and thoughts. Let your child know that he or she is special enough to spend time with. As a result, closer feelings and better communication between the two of you can occur.

ROOTS.

Get out the old photo albums and pass them around. Those old snapshots can bring out a lot of fun and give you all time to reminisce. (What's Uncle Bob doing? Who is that lady in the pink dress?)

If you've got home movies, show them. If the kids lose interest, try watching them in reverse, fast forward, or slow motion. That'll make 'em pay attention!

You could make your own family home movies or cassette recordings for an oral history of your family. Or get out the paper and pencils for a family tree. It's a wonderful family activity that involves interviewing, drawing, researching, and writing. The point is: You'll be discovering one another and what you have in common. You'll be helping your preteen develop a sense of pride in your family and a sense of roots.

LET'S SPEND THE DAY (OR NIGHT) TOGETHER.

At least one day or night a week, everybody does something together. Family members can rotate the responsibility for planning the activities. It might be a thrilling evening playing cards, a board game or Charades, or a picnic, or a trip to the zoo or to an amusement park. Try helping your kids with their homework, assuming that is, that you can figure out what they're supposed to be doing. Or you could just watch TV and talk about what you've seen.

MEALTIME.

These days, everybody seems to just graze at the refrigerator. But make it a point for the family to sit down to share meals. Once you get used to each other's manners and quirks, you'll probably enjoy it.

You could even assign jobs for each family member. One could cook, one could set the table, one could clean up. Rotate chores. This helps everyone feel responsible and no one feel like they're stuck with the yuckiest job or with too much to do.

Hint, hint: Make sure the messiest family member doesn't always prepare the meal or someone else will have a lot of cleaning up to do.

Clockwise from top left: Bob Llewellyn/Four By Five Barbara Rios/Photo Researchers, Inc. © Joseph Sterling Tom Rosenthal/Four By Five © Jeffry W. Myers/FPG
Scott Barrow/Four By Five Center photo: © Joseph Sterling

IT ALL 'ADS' UP

From coast to coast, people in the know drink Thud Beer. They're part of the fun group. They know how to have a good time. Isn't it time you joined them?

Illustration: Susan Faiola

Ads are extremely influential in shaping kids' and adults' ideas about alcohol. Why not share this beer ad with your preteen? He or she should understand that ads try to get people to buy a product. Many of the ads appeal to fitting in with a group and having a good time.

Ask your child how he or she might have a good time without drinking. Can your child think of ways the people in the ad could have a good time without drinking beer?

MORE AD ACTIVITIES

Most alcoholic beverage commercials deal with patriotism, having a good time, or employ snob appeal. When you and your child are watching TV, discuss the ads that you see. Who are they appealing to? What are they trying to say?

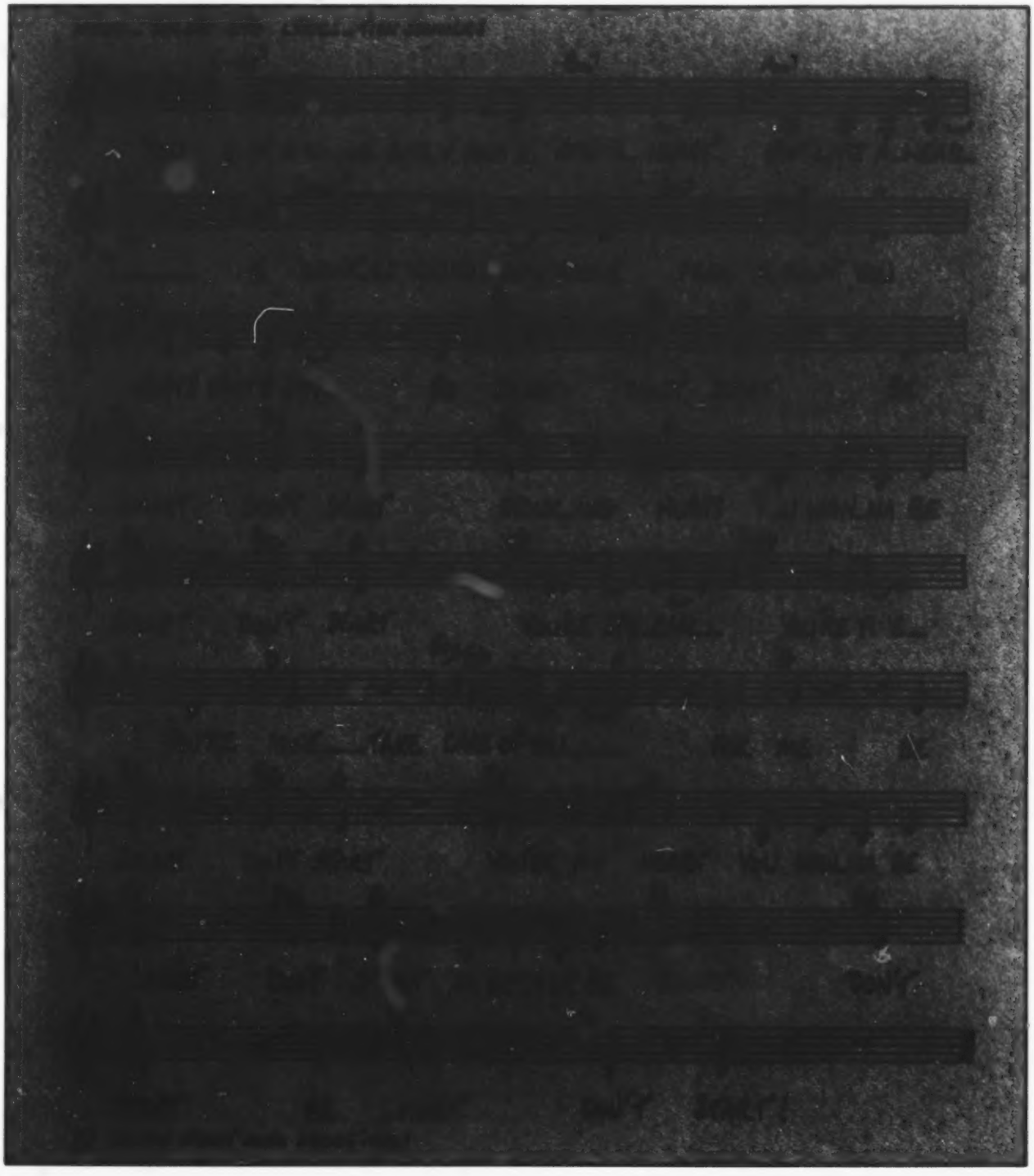
Your son or daughter might like to draw a beer, wine, or liquor ad that gives another picture of what happens when people drink too much. (They can get drunk, throw up, smell bad, fall down, get into accidents.)

BE A CARTOONIST

Here's a cartoon. There's just one problem. The artist has forgotten the words. Why not fill in the bubbles with your child? One of you could write the adult's dialogue, the other the preteen's.

Illustration: Susan Paula

BE SMART! DON'T START!



RESOURCE GROUPS FOR PARENTS

The following resource groups can provide additional information and/or assistance to parents.

Al-Anon
Family Group Headquarters
(includes Alateen for children or siblings of alcoholics, and Al-Anon Adult Children of Alcoholics groups)
P.O. Box 862
Midtown Station
New York, NY 10018
(212) 302-7240

Alcoholics
Anonymous
Box 459
Grand Central Station
New York, NY 10163
(212) 686-1100

Chemical
People Project
WQED
4802 Fifth Avenue
Pittsburgh, PA 15213
(412) 622-1491

Families in Action
Drug Information Center
Suite 300
3845 N. Druid Hills Road
Decatur, GA 30033
(404) 325-5799

Mothers Against Drunk Driving
(MADD)
National Headquarters
669 Airport Freeway
Suite 310
Hurst, TX 76053-3944
(817) 268-MADD

National Association
for Children of Alcoholics
31706 Coast Highway
Suite 201
South Laguna, CA 92677
(714) 499-3889

National Association of State Alcohol
and Drug Abuse Directors
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 530
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-6868

National Clearinghouse
for Alcohol Information
(NCALI)
P.O. Box 2345, Dept. BS/DS
Rockville, MD 20852
(301) 468-2600

National Coalition for the Prevention of
Drug and Alcohol Abuse
6655 Sharon Woods Blvd.
Columbus, OH 43229
(614) 882-6400

National Congress of Parents and Teachers (PTA)
700 North Rush Street
Chicago, IL 60611-2571
(312) 787-0977

National Council on Alcoholism, Inc.
12 West 21st Street, 7th Floor
New York, NY 10010
(212) 206-6770

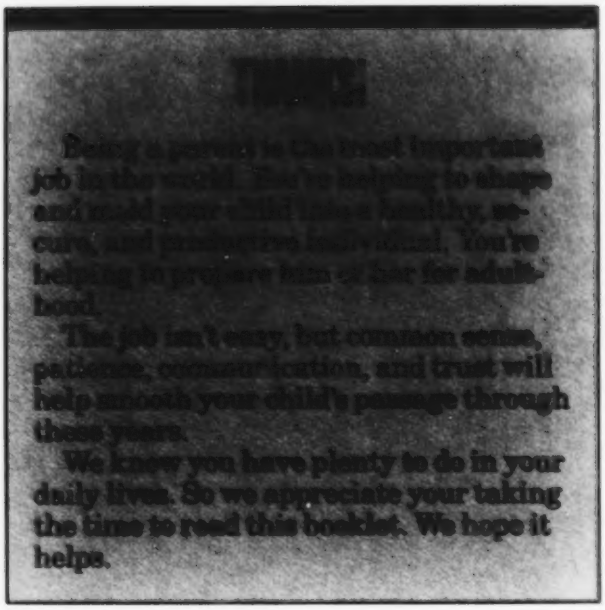
National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth
8730 Georgia Avenue
Suite 200
Silver Spring, MD 20910
1-800-554-KIDS

National Parents Resource Institute on Drug Education (PRIDE)
Robert W. Woodruff Volunteer Service Center
Suite 1002
100 Edgewood Avenue
Atlanta, GA 30303
(404) 658-2548

National Prevention Network
c/o NASADAD
444 North Capitol Street, NW
Suite 530
Washington, DC 20001
(202) 783-6868

There are a number of resources available to all parents in most communities across the United States. You may be interested to know, for instance, that the following organizations also are involved in activities to prevent the early use of alcohol: Girl Scouts of America, Inc.; Girls Clubs; Boys Clubs; Lions Clubs International; Kiwanis; 4-H; Freemasons; American Academy of Pediatrics; American Academy of Family Physicians; American Bar Association; and many others. Many resources, such as the National Federation of Parents for Drug-Free Youth, offer membership in parent groups and peer-led programs.

To become more fully involved in the "BE SMART! DON'T START!" campaign and other prevention activities, contact your State Alcohol Authority, listed in your phone book under State Government.



Being a parent is the most important job in the world. You're helping to shape and mold your child into a healthy, secure, and productive individual. You're helping to prepare him or her for adulthood.

The job isn't easy, but common sense, patience, communication, and trust will help smooth your child's passage through these years.

We know you have plenty to do in your daily lives. So we appreciate your taking the time to read this booklet. We hope it helps.

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES
Public Health Service
Alcohol, Drug Abuse, and Mental Health Administration
Office for Substance Abuse Prevention

DHHS Publication No. ADM 87-1500 Printed 1987